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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G/TIP, G, DRL, INL, EAP/RSP, EAP/CM

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TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [HK](#) [MC](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TIP: CLARIFYING HONG KONG'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE
ARRANGEMENTS

REF: 09 HONG KONG 2340

Classified By: Acting Consul General Christopher Marut. Reasons 1.4 B&D
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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Hong Kong NGOs providing care to victims of trafficking in persons (TIP) recently clarified remarks made to G/TIP Ambassador Luis CdeBaca which suggested the Hong Kong government was unwilling to fund their work (reftel) by explaining they had never actually requested financial assistance. NGOs have generally found their own resources adequate to support their clients and have not requested subsidies even when their clients chose to assist in prosecutions. While the NGOs differed in their assessments of how willing the government would be to provide funding if asked, all felt the lack of a formal government program for dealing with TIP would make requesting assistance complicated. From their side, Hong Kong officials have stated categorically that stipends provided to potential prosecution witnesses do not need to be repaid should the victim ultimately choose not to testify. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) During G/TIP Ambassador Luis CdeBaca's December 4 visit to Hong Kong, NGOs expressed concerns that the government was reluctant to provide funding to anyone but active prosecution witnesses (reftel). We recently sought clarification of these concerns with the Bethune House for Migrant Workers, the Diocesan Pastoral Center for Filipinos (DPCF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Hong Kong office. We also sought clarification from the Hong Kong Police Department regarding support offered to potential prosecution witnesses.

No Need to Ask

¶3. (SBU) Bethune House, DPCF and IOM all confirmed to Poloff their organizations had never requested Hong Kong government (HKG) funding to care for victims of trafficking in persons (TIP) because their existing budgets were adequate. Even in the rare instances when a victim under their care subsequently decided to press charges, the NGOs did not request HKG assistance, relying instead on their normal budget. IOM Hong Kong Director Gloria Ko told us she used IOM global fund allocations or other existing project grants to help TIP victims. DPCF Director Sr. Felicitas explained that DPCF was entirely funded by the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese.

Will Without a Way?

¶4. (SBU) Sr. Felicitas believed the "HKG would definitely help" if she asked but "would not offer," while IOM's Ko believed it would be "quite difficult" to get the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to commit separate resources for TIP victims. Ko's more pessimistic view stemmed from her belief

that the HKG did not consider TIP an important issue. Though more confident of the HKG's willingness to help, Sr. Felicitas noted the HKG lacked a formal structure dedicated to TIP victims, meaning a request from an NGO for assistance for a TIP victim would go through an as-yet undefined ad hoc process.

15. (SBU) While The Hong Kong government does not itself run a shelter dedicated to TIP victims, five government-subsidized women refuge centers for domestic abuse victims are open to TIP victims. Sr. Felicitas suspected non-ethnic Chinese women did not approach the government-subsidized shelters because they believed the shelters primarily catered to Chinese speakers. In fact, while SWD officials told us staff at the shelters mostly spoke Chinese and English, SWD could provide interpreters for other languages upon request.

No Quid Pro Quo

16. (C) Sr. Felicitas confirmed that the HKG provided HKD \$100/day (about USD 13) to TIP victims that it referred to NGOs. (Note: DPCF currently is housing two TIP victims who will be testifying in court February 1-3. End Note). During a meeting December 30 to follow up on Ambassador CdeBaca's visit, Hong Kong Police Superintendent Adrian Kwan insisted a victim's willingness to serve as a witness in court was not a requirement for HKG assistance. If a victim ultimately decided not to press charges, s/he did not have to repay the financial assistance already received.

MARUT